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WE ACTUALLY SAW 'THE INTERVIEW'

AND HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IT. PAGE 20

metro

NEW YORK CITY No. 1 FREE DAILY IN THE U

Weekend, December 19-21, 2014 **www.metro.us | t: MetroNewYork**

Goodbye, Middle-earth

Films. This is it — the last of Peter Jackson's Tolkien movies ends with "The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies." We talk to elven star Evangeline Lilly, look at the history of the author's movies and make predictions about the crazy reboot you know is going to happen in the next 10 years. PAGE 16

Enjoy this, because "The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies" is almost certainly the last time you'll see Ian McKellen's iconic portrayal of Gandalf the Grey. / WARNER BROS.

Road and safety tests demanded for cabbies

PAGE 02

Illegal cigarette sales in NYC booming

PAGE 04

Is Cameron Diaz really getting married?

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Rex, Jets look to spoil Belichick's Christmas

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Top 3

The best of Metro.us

1 'Accused Boston Marathon bomber appeared "dapper and relaxed" in court'

2 'PHOTOS: Production stills from "The Interview"'

3 '5 of the best acting breakthroughs of 2014'

On the go

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The Master Cabbie Taxi Academy in Long Island City. / MILES DIXON, METRO

Mom: Road test needed for cabbies

Taxis. The mother of a child killed by a cabbie says the city must have a road test for drivers.

Cab drivers need to face regular road tests to keep New Yorkers safe, the mother of a 9-year-old boy killed earlier this year by a taxi told city regulators at a hearing Thursday.

"Just because they passed [a written] test doesn't mean they know how to drive in the city," said Dana Lerner, who's son Cooper was hit by a cab and killed as he walked across West End Avenue with his father.

The city's Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) is looking at beefing up education requirements for yellow, green and livery cab drivers with more classroom hours. Lerner says that's not enough preparation.

"There's a lot of new proposals, but none of them are requiring a road test for cab drivers," Lerner told Metro.

Lerner told the TLC that a raft of incompatible city and state rules let drivers on the road without having to pass a road test in New York City.

The only course required for yellow, green and livery cab drivers is a six-hour state-run defensive driving course that has to be retaken every three years.

"When you go into a restaurant you know its grade, or when you go to a doctor you see their license," Lerner told Metro. "When you go into a cab, you don't know anything about the driver."

The TLC's proposal would create a single set of safety requirements for all 125,000 permit holders it oversees. The plan may create a single school to teach cabbies the new rules.

Asked by Lerner why drivers who take the course upstate will be allowed to drive in New York's high-pressure traffic, where a single mistake can be fatal, TLC Commissioner Meera Joshi replied: "It's not part of our current curriculum. It's something that we're going to look into."

Visit **Metro.us** to read more about controversies surrounding cabs.

Quoted

"Driving in New York City is very different than driving in upstate New York. There are lot of good cab drivers out there ... but there are plenty of drivers who just cannot do this work." Lerner

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Bronx

Hit-and-run leaves 56-year-old woman dead

A 56-year-old woman was killed by a hit-and-run driver while crossing Bruckner Boulevard in the Bronx around 8 p.m. Wednesday.

Denise Lippin, a resident of 135th Street in the Bronx, was hit by a 2012 Nissan Sentra whose driver fled the scene. No arrests had been made Thursday evening. METRO

Cold weather

Bowery Coat Drive this Saturday

The Bowery Rescue Center, a homeless shelter at 317 Bowery, is holding a coat drive and coat giveaway on Saturday from noon to 3 pm. METRO

Help others fight the cold. GETTY IMAGES

Preet Bharara / FILE PHOTO

Oversight. US to sue NYC over teen rights violations at Rikers

The U.S. government will sue New York City over widespread civil rights violations of teenage inmates at the Rikers Island jail complex.

The Justice Department made the announcement Thursday, raising the prospect of years of federal oversight of the troubled jail.

The move by Attorney General Eric Holder and Preet Bharara, the U.S. attorney for New York's Southern District, followed a report in August describing a pattern of violent abuse of 16- to 18-year-old male inmates by guards and others held at Rikers.

"At the end of the day, there must be a court-ordered agreement," Bharara told reporters at a press conference. REUTERS

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Illegal cigarette sales booming

Loosies. State and local taxes are driving a growing black market.

Cigarettes on the loose in New York City. / METRO

Illegal cigarette sales represent close to a third of New York's tobacco market.

"It's a problem everywhere, but it's a big problem in New York," said Scott Drenkard, an economist and spokesman for the Tax Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based nonpartisan think tank that researches national and local tax policies.

In the wake of the killing of Staten Island's Eric Garner — who had been detained by police on suspicion of selling "loosies" on the street — Metro looked into this underground market, its impact on the city's economy and why law enforcement pursue and arrest people for the possession and illegal sale of untaxed cigarettes.

Quoted

"If all cigarettes were taxed, cigarette tax collections would have been $140.5 million."

Golebiewski

Police had arrested Garner previously for possession with intent to sell "loosies."

The illegal sale of loosies and out-of-state cigarettes in New York is defined as "tax-caused phenomenon," according to a report by the Tax Foundation. In 2002 New York City implemented an additional tax of $1.50 per pack, that increase was followed by another in 2010 when New York state increased its cigarette tax to $4.35 per pack.

That encouraged store owners and street vendors to evade taxes to and profit by traveling to Virginia and North Carolina to buy cigarettes at lower costs ($5.25 and $5.45, respectively) and transport the product back for sale in New York.

Drenkard likens the process to the bootlegging of alcohol in the Prohibition Era.

According to Julie Anna Golebiewski, a spokesperson for the Independent Budget Office, a nonpartisan city finance watchdog group, the smuggling of untaxed cigarettes costs the city tens of millions of dollars a year.

"Assuming the smuggling rate in the city was the same as the state, the FY [fiscal year] 2013 cigarette tax collections were $79.9 million less than they would have been if all cigarettes were taxed," Golebiewski told Metro.

"That is, if all cigarettes were taxed, cigarette tax collections would have been $140.5 million, instead of the actual $60.6 million."

On Tuesday, the city moved forward with a federal lawsuit against Discount Tobacco and Things, a Woodbridge, Virginia-based tobacco shop officials believe sold thousands of cartons of cigarettes for illegal resale in New York City.

Still, for many tobacco bootleggers, New York represents an ideal arbitrage market for tobacco sales.

"There's a profit motive there," said Drenkard. "There's this huge tax distortion. Two hundred percent of the price of the product is the level of the tax, once you factor in state, federal and local taxes. That distortion makes it so all this activity is illegal."

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Convicted

NYPD officer found guilty in ticket scheme

A former NYPD lieutenant must serve 200 hours of community service or risk serving jail time for her part in a ticket-fixing scheme.

Jennara Cobb, 39, was one of 16 officers arrested and charged in 2011 for warning officers involved in the ticket-fixing scandal.

Cobb was forced to resign her position with the Internal Affairs Bureau when she was found guilty of divulging an eavesdropping warrant, obstructing government administration and official misconduct.

The three misdemeanor charges could have meant up to a year in jail, an option which remains if she does not serve her full community service.

In addition to losing her job, Cobb was also forced to give up her pension and health benefits. METRO

Brooklyn

Dead woman identified, alleged killer caught

Police arrested Brooklyn man Steve Whittingham for the murder of 36-year-old Jonelle Barker, who was found stabbed to death in a car parked on New Lots Avenue, in the East New York section of Brooklyn at about 3:30 a.m. Thursday, police said.

Whittingman has also been charged with the murder of Jerome Barrett, who was shot and killed in the lobby a Brooklyn building early Wednesday morning. Police said the crimes were linked. METRO

Brooklyn rapper held on $2 million bail

Conspiracy. Bobby Shmurda pleaded not guilty to weapons, conspiracy charges.

Bobby Shmurda performs at Barclays Center. / FILMMAGIC

Brooklyn rapper Bobby Shmurda, whose real name is Ackquille Pollard, was being held Thursday on $2 million bail, after pleading not guilty Thursday to conspiracy, narcotics and weapons charges.

Pollard and eight members from his GS9 (G Stone Crips) crew were arrested Wednesday morning at Midtown Manhattan's Quad Studios, the same studio where rapper Tupac Shakur was shot in 1994. Five other GS9 members were arrested elsewhere in the city and another two were apprehended outside of New York state. Cops seized a total of 21 weapons.

Cops conducted a 22-month investigation leading up to Wednesday's arrests.

The Manhattan DA's Special Narcotics Prosecutor found that the group, which operated on East 95th Street from Kings Highway to East New York Avenue in East Flatbush, engaged in violent disputes, nonfatal shootings and the murder of a rival gang member.

Twelve GS9 members were also charged with narcotics trafficking between New York City and Miami, Florida.

"These violent individuals will now be held accountable for their decision to participate in a gang which has brought a disturbing level of violence to the streets of Brooklyn and beyond our city's borders," Police Commissioner Bill Bratton said in a statement.

Pollard, 20, signed to Epic Records, rose to fame with his "Hot Boy" single, which topped Billboard's Rap and R&B charts in November. He just released his debut EP titled "Shmurda She Wrote."

Pollard is being held on $2 million bail and is scheduled to be arraigned on Jan. 29.

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Quote

"I been selling crack since like the fifth grade / It never made no difference what the s— made."

"Hot Boy" – Bobby Schmurda

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The Bronx

Father charged in daughter's deadly crash

A Scarsdale man whose 15-year-old daughter killed three people in a Pennsylvania car crash denies having given her permission to drive the vehicle, his attorney said on Thursday. The daughter did not have a driver's license.

The father, Michael J. Ware, was charged on Wednesday with manslaughter.

To win a conviction, the district attorney would need to prove that Ware allowed his daughter to drive his SUV and would then need to show a direct link between granting permission and the accident, said Robert Reno, Ware's lawyer.

"It's a stretch," Reno said. "It's a very sensational legal theory they're proposing." METRO

Lyman Place Gang members brought in on murder rap

A New York Police Department vehicle responds to a violent incident. / REUTERS

Bronx. A yearlong investigation led to murder charges against 11 gang members.

The Bronx District Attorney's office said it charged 11 members of the Lyman Place Gang on Thursday with crimes including murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, criminal possession of a weapon and hindering prosecution, after a yearlong investigation by the NYPD.

The murder charges go back to an October 19, 2013, incident, when alleged gang member Sebastian Benjamin, known as Shaba, allegedly shot innocent bystander Pablo Pagan when he and members of the gang went to Vyse Avenue for the sole purpose of firing into a rival gang's "enemy territory," with no specific intended target.

Attempted murder charges stem from two incidents. In one, on June 15, 2011, accused shooter Nathaniel Bellamy, aka Black Nasty, targeted rival Doe Avenue Gang member Charles Ryan.

Ryan was on the phone arguing with his girlfriend when Bellamy approached, withdrew a 9mm pistol from a black plastic bodega bag, and shot Ryan in the legs, the DA's office said.

The second attempted murder occurred shortly before 1 p.m. on Nov. 21, 2013, when Terrell Nimmons, aka Ice-T Lyman, allegedly drew a gun and fired at rival gang member Jaquan Guzman, missing his target and hitting a fence on the grounds of P.S. 132. No schoolchildren were hit, the DA said.

The NYPD tracked the gang members' communication on Facebook, and the DA's office said they used Facebook to plan, execute and clean up after their crimes.

"The issue of gun violence remains an issue for the citizens of the Bronx," said District Attorney Robert T. Johnson.

Aliases

Members' names include:

- Black Nasty
- Day Day
- Shawny Shawn
- Titties
- Maybach

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In courtroom, Tsarnaev seems dapper, relaxed

Supporters of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev hold signs outside the Moakley Federal Courthouse on Thursday after a pretrial hearing for the Boston Marathon bombing suspect. / NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, METRO

Boston. The accused marathon bomber showed his face in public for the first time in 17 months.

The man accused of setting off two bombs at the finish line of the 2013 Boston Marathon appeared dapper and relaxed Thursday in a federal courtroom in Boston, where he made his second public appearance since he was arrested and charged with the deadly terror attacks.

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, 21, wore a black zip-up cardigan sweater and a calm expression as he sat shoulder to shoulder with his defense team in a packed room at the Moakley Federal House on Thursday.

Tsarnaev faces a slew of charges stemming from the April 15, 2013, bombing that left three people dead and as many as 264 injured.

His appearance was a far cry from the last time the public saw him. In his court appearance 17 months ago, Tsarnaev's left arm was in a cast and the left side of his face appeared scarred and swollen. On Thursday, Tsarnaev's face appeared normal, though his left eye drooped. His hair was curled and tousled, and he had a light beard.

Charges

30-count federal indictment:

- He faces four counts of murder for the deaths of three bombing victims and the shooting death of an MIT police officer.
- He is also charged with conspiring to use and using a weapon of mass destruction, malicious destruction of property causing death, and terrorism.

Quoted

"The U.S. government is killing our innocent civilians."

"We Muslims are one body, you hurt one you hurt us all."

Tsarnaev's scrawlings on the inside of a drydocked boat in Watertown, shortly before his arrest

MORGAN ROUSSEAU
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On Twitter

- "Can't believe the idiots supporting the boston marathon bomber outside his court hearing" **@TIFFSYTIFFSY**
- "So people were protesting in favor of the Boston bomber at his most recent court date. Are you [expletive] kidding me? I'm speechless." **@CLAYBRUNEAU**
- "Why do we have trial for someone like the Boston marathon bomber.. cut his throat in times square." **@MCMILLEN_MIKE**
- "They're still showing the Boston Marathon bomber's face on the news. Disgusting. Dont they know that's what he wanted? -_-" **@ASKARKOFFICIAL**
- "Anyone supporting the Boston bomber at the fed court house are stupid. Have a nice time getting monitored by the Feds haha" **@TOOHURLEY**

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Opinion

TOM FOREMAN

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT FOR CNN

CNN=POLITICS

EASIER TRAVEL, HARD DISCUSSION

When you're in a close relationship long enough, you know that certain topics are off limits. For example, my wife and I will not discuss cats, the merits of in-laws or how great Sandra Bullock looks despite her age. It's not that we have nothing to say, but rather that we say too much. Our discussions can quickly turn into a debates, then into arguments, then into angry exchanges that end with, "And I thought 'Gravity' was a great movie!"

This comes to mind because of the news about Cuba.

In political terms, the island south of Florida has always been a difficult topic of conversation. Ask many young Americans what they think of the long-standing U.S. antipathy toward Cuba and you'll likely be greeted with a shrug. For them, concerns about communism, dictators on the doorstep and banned cigars are like talk about saving tinfoil during World War II: quaint relics of a bygone age.

Quoted

"Elderly Cuban Americans, however, will glower as they recall fleeing the Castro regime, losing businesses, homes and land in the process."

Elderly Cuban Americans, however, will glower as they recall fleeing the Castro regime, losing businesses, homes and land in the process. They'll talk about unfair arrests, imprisonment, and suppression of dissent. Others, including my mother (who has never even been to Cuba) will recall the terror of the Cuban Missile Crisis when for two dark weeks it seemed the Soviets might launch a torrent of nuclear warheads at the U.S. from only 90 miles away.

For decades that sharp divide kept any talk of change to whispers. But now the older opposition is dying off. And after a year of secret talks (once again, it appears this administration just loves secrets!), President Obama has sweeping plans for new diplomatic ties with Cuba and lower economic and travel restrictions. "It's time for a new approach," he says.

Maybe. But make no mistake: Some older folks will see this as the White House legitimizing a regime of thugs that has brutalized their families and friends for ages. True, those voices are growing more faint, but they may yet be loud enough to prove Cuba is still a hard subject to bring up over the holiday table.

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US Supreme Court

Some states challenge Colorado pot laws

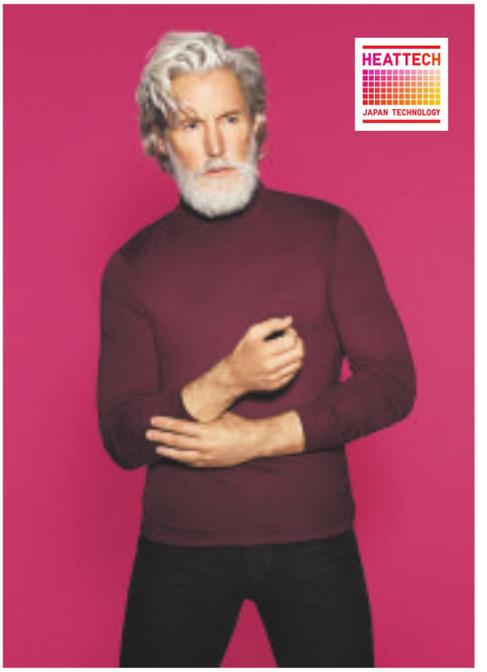
Nebraska and Oklahoma challenged neighboring Colorado's recreational marijuana laws in the U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday, amid complaints its pot was seeping across their borders. Colorado vowed to defend its laws.

Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning said he joined Oklahoma in filing the action against Colorado, where voters chose to legalize recreational marijuana in a landmark 2012 vote even as the drug remains federally outlawed. **REUTERS**

Quoted

"Federal law undisputedly prohibits the production and sale of marijuana."

Bruning, adding that drugs threaten the health and safety of children and calling narcotics trafficking a national, interstate problem



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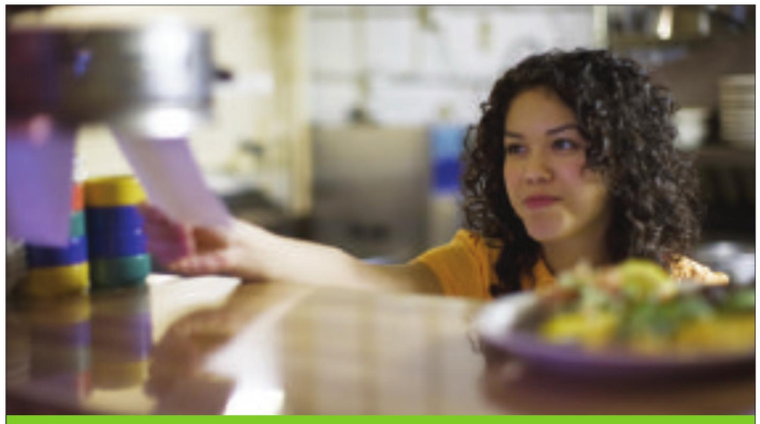

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Putin says economy will be cured, offers no remedy to fix it

Russians. The ruble's decline could erode faith in Putin's ability to provide financial stability.

President Vladimir Putin assured Russians on Thursday that the economy would rebound after the ruble's dramatic slide this year, but offered no remedy for a deepening financial crisis.

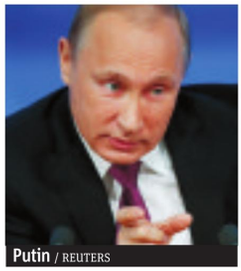
Defiant and confident at a three-hour news conference, Putin blamed the economic problems on external factors and said the crisis over Ukraine was caused by the West, which he accused of building a "virtual" Berlin Wall to contain Russia.

At times sneering, at others cracking jokes, he ignored pressure to say how he will fix an economy facing what his economy minister calls a "perfect storm" of low oil prices, Western sanctions over Ukraine and global financial problems.

The ruble has fallen about 45 percent against the dollar this year, and suffered particularly steep falls on Monday and Tuesday, but Putin refused to call it a crisis and said it would eventually rise again.

Although he said the recovery might take two years, much will depend on how long the West maintains sanctions on Russia.

Sitting at a big desk in front of two large screens showing close-ups of his face, Putin appeared mainly intent on showing Russians he is in command and will not kowtow to the West. REUTERS



Putin / REUTERS

Quoted

"If the situation develops unfavorably, we will have to amend our plans. Beyond doubt, we will have to cut some (spending). But a positive turn and emergence from the current situation are inevitable." Putin

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The future of travel is virtual(ly) reality

Wow, I just arrived in Australia! / GETTY IMAGES

Tourism. Some projects have begun experimenting with virtual tours as an alternative to travel in the real world.

In recent years, technology has changed many human activities, and tourism is one of them. Some projects proposed to complement and revolutionize the way humans travel the world, through virtual reality and without travelers having to leave their home and spend hours on an airplane.

Barcelona-based firm Omnipresenz allows customers to explore the far reaches of Earth through camera-equipped human avatars. In addition, the #GetTeleported, developed by VFX studio Framestore and Marriott Hotels, on the Oculus Rift headset offers a 4-D, fully immersive, virtual-travel experience. These projects are presented as an option for the global travel industry.

According to their creators, these projects seek to redefine the future of travel using technology inspired by science fiction.

"The Omnipresenz idea emerged from the illusion of real-life experience in the futuristic adventures we've ever read or seen on TV," said Carlos Soro Sanso, chief operating officer of Omnipresenz.

But the possibility to take virtual tours generates skepticism among some expert travelers.

Steve Burgess, a freelance journalist who frequently writes about his travels around the world, told Metro that travel without leaving home "would destroy the rationale for travel — it would be like those fruit juices that have almost no real fruit. If I want to be taken away for just an hour, I have TV or the Internet. Travel must be something more. The whole point is to experience another land, another world. To do that you have to interact with people, not just programs."

However, the creators of virtual travel, and the tourism industry in general, said they do not intend for these new technologies to replace travel in the real world, but to function as a complement and even encourage people to travel more in real life.

"We believe that with Omnipresenz people can recover the desire to leave the house and socialize more, even with the different cultures in your own neighborhood. I honestly believe that after experiencing Omnipresenz you will have more desire to travel and meet in person the places visited by your avatar," said Soro Sanso.

Burgess said he shares the idea that virtual tours are only a supplement for travelers, because they can never replace the experience of knowing a place in person.

Besides encouraging real-life expeditions, technologies such as Omnipresenz also seek to help people with physical or financial difficulties to find themselves, virtually speaking, in places that they cannot access.

"One of the objectives of Omnipresenz is to facilitate travel, to remote or local places, of the people who have temporary or chronic physical difficulties of mobility, so they can share emotions and out of isolation through new eyes to reality through a new playful and transparent channel communication," said Soro Sanso.

While continuing the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of this new technology and whether it could replace the experience of a trip in the real world, the first experimenters of virtual tours say that they are satisfied with the experience and are willing to share it with others.

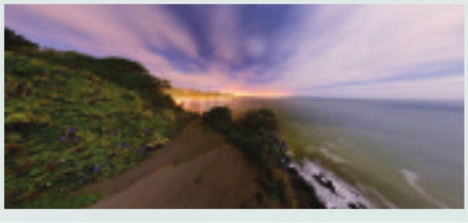
"My experience has been incredible," said Marte Roel, the first user of Omnipresenz. It's something I even share with friends or with a partner."

DANIEL CASILLAS
MWN

360-degree tours

Virtual travel tour app

This app created by Czech firm Panoramas shows the different places of the world using the latest imaging technology — 360-degree virtual tours, which are linked to the GPS satellite map. A virtual tour is a special photo that shows the place at 360 by 180 degrees — this way, viewers are able see everything around them. The virtual tour app is available for iPad, iPhone, Android 4+, BlackBerry 10 and Windows Phone 8.



Quoted

"Those kinds of virtual-reality experiences might become popular forms of entertainment, but they'll never be a replacement for real travel." Burgess

Q&A with Marte Roel

First user of Omnipresenz: 'I felt I was in another place'

How was your experience to "travel" with Omnipresenz?
Travel in Omnipresenz is a unique experience, a lot of freedom and even transformation, in the sense that I've let things that I might not have done otherwise and has had an impact on my way of being beyond the screen.

Did you really feel like you were in another place with the help of Omnipresenz?
Yes, I felt I was in another place, not only in a geographical sense, but also a sense of being open to adventure. Besides knowing a different place, colors and sounds, I got to know people and have made very funny connections.

How do you compare your experience with Omnipresenz and an ordinary trip?
The experience for me was something different. Yes it is a journey, but it is a peculiar journey where one is encouraged to experiment, to talk to people and where one immediately sees peculiar reactions of people. It's like traveling with a mask and without leaving home commitments. On the other hand, the generated connection with the avatar is very peculiar; suddenly the decisions are made from a kind of mutual empathy. ... It was a very interesting experience indeed.

What activities could you do during your trip?
I remember an incredible moment when I ran through my avatar in Plaça de Catalunya in Barcelona chasing pigeons, and people saw me as if I were crazy — it was amazing. I also I wanted to approach a group of girls trying to be good people — they were super fun and my avatar gave a rose to one [laughs].

DANIEL CASILLAS, METRO

Sugar is worse for you than salt

We feel the same way, kid. / GOODSHOT RF

Study. The not so sweet truth could break your heart.

Sugar, not salt, could put us at even greater risk of heart-related diseases, according to a new study published in the journal Open Heart.

For years, scientists have pointed to salt's role in rising rates of cardiovascular issues, while the role of sugar has long been underestimated.

"Approximately 15 percent of people in the U.S. are consuming 25 percent or more [of their] calories from added sugars. This level of intake almost triples their risk of cardiovascular mortality," says the study's lead researcher, Dr. James J. DiNicolantonio of Saint Luke's Mid American Heart Institute.

"And yet this level of intake is supposedly OK based on the Institute of Medicine's recommendations."

It's the ketonic monosaccharide fructose found in sugar that is particularly harmful and responsible for contributing to hypertension.

Primarily metabolized in the liver, this sugar found in abundance in fruits and honey leads to fatty liver and hepatic insulin resistance, causing the pancreas to secrete more insulin, which drives increased visceral fat storage, inflammation and diabetes — all of which puts stress on the heart.

DiNicolantonio and colleagues also established that the average reductions in blood pressure achieved by restricting salt intake tend to be relatively small, meaning that current recommendations to restrict sodium intake to less than 3 grams could actually intensify cardiovascular issues.

"Lowering sodium in the food supply will likely increase the intake of added sugars and processed foods, as sodium intake is likely physiologically driven — we've been consuming the same amount of sodium for 50 years. We will likely just eat more processed foods that are now lower in sodium to obtain the sodium our physiology demands," he says.

These new findings could pave the way for significant changes in dietary recommendations, with the expert advising, "The best way to prevent high blood pressure would be to eat real whole foods and avoid anything with added sugars: sucrose (also known as table sugar) and high fructose corn syrup."

ELODIE NOEL, MWN
metronewyork
letters@metro.us

Quoted

"The best way to prevent high blood pressure would be to eat real whole foods and avoid anything with added sugars." Dr. James J. DiNicolantonio

Stats

25%+

The average American is getting more than a quarter of his or her calories from added sugars, which triples the risk of heart problems.

Hidden sugar

Some products in which you might not expect to find sugar:

- Yogurt
- Pasta sauce
- Agave (85% fructose)
- Barbecue sauce
- Dried fruits
- Granola bars

Barbecue sauce can be packed with sugar. MONKEY BUSINESS

2 CULTURE

Animal instinct

There's a Battle Moose?

A lot of colorful characters contribute to the titular Battle of the Five Armies in the final "Hobbit" film, with countless humans, dwarves, elves and orcs clanging swords and screaming bloody murder. But amid the din, one clear MVP shines through — a stalwart iconoclast worthy of his own spinoff franchise. That character? Lee Pace's moose. Pace's noble elf king, Thranduil, proudly rides into battle on the noblest and most magnificent of beasts, which I have dubbed his Battle Moose. NED EHRBAR

Leaving Tolkien-ville

Farewells. Peter Jackson's "Hobbit" trilogy comes to an end — as does his signature vision of the author's world.

This is it. With the arrival of "The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies," there is no more Middle-earth. That is to say there is no more of Peter Jackson's iconic rendition of Middle-earth, which has existed since 2001's "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings." Though Jackson's take on the series' initial, slender installment has been brutally puffed-out, it will be a shame to never again see Ian McKellen's Gandalf, Cate Blanchett's Galadriel and more. Let's weep some.

MATT PRIGGE
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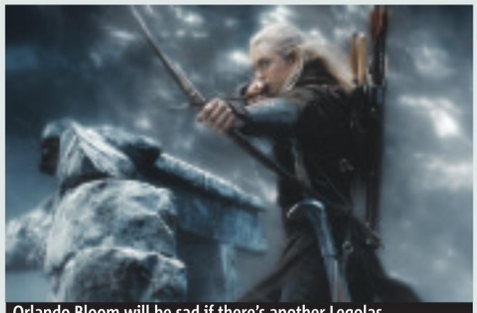
See you later?

What to expect from the inevitable 'Hobbit' reboot

Let's face it, eventually Peter Jackson will get bored again. Or the economy of Wellington, New Zealand, will need a boost. Or New Line Cinema will realize it doesn't have any other sure-fire revenue streams. Or some young film executive — who is probably in middle school right now — will think it's a brilliant idea. No matter what the impetus, eventually "The Hobbit" franchise will be rebooted. Here's how we think things will be different next time.



Orlando Bloom will be sad if there's another Legolas.
ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES

1 Hey, how about four movies? Five, maybe?
Sure, some people complained about stretching a rather thin children's novel into three extra-long feature films, but they still bought tickets. So let's see how far we can go with this.

2 More "Lord of the Rings" characters
Nobody seemed to mind too much how Peter Jackson shoehorned Legolas (Orlando Bloom) into "The Hobbit" movies. Think bigger!

3 Messing with "The Lord of the Rings" timeline even more
Who cares about continuity when you can have even more fan-friendly inside jokes? Let's have Sean Bean show up even earlier and die again. (If Sean Bean is unavailable, check on Hologram Sean Bean.)

4 Smell-o-vision
Using 3-D cameras and higher frame rates might have been enough bells and whistles for a 2010 crowd, but tomorrow's audiences need a little something extra — such as movie-related scents pumped into the theater. You think you know dwarves now, just wait until you get a whiff of them after an unexpectedly long journey.

5 Can Tolkien be a character?
Bilbo telling the story of "The Hobbit" was a great framing device, but how about a framing device for the framing device? Kids love narrative bookends! We could feature J.R.R. Tolkien first getting the idea for "The Hobbit." NED EHRBAR

Timeline of the 'Rings'

1966: "The Hobbit"
Here's one of the most beautiful films that exists only to exploit a legal loophole. Producer William L. Snyder envisioned a splashy feature. But when rights were about to lapse, he cranked out a brief short.

1977-1980: Animated films
Rankin-Bass produced their own "Hobbit" toon, followed by Ralph Bakshi's part-rotoscoped "The Lord of the Rings." The far more cute "Return of the Kings" closed things out.

1985: "The Fantastic Journey of the Hobbit Mr. Bilbo Baggins"
The first live-action Middle-earth came from the Soviet Union, of course. "The Hobbit" became a TV movie, with actors in funny makeup scared by puppets.

2001-2003: "The Lord of the Rings"
One of the biggest gambles in movie history paid off and then some, as we now know. But at the time there was a chance a pricey film series based on nerd books might never go mainstream.

2012-2014: "The Hobbit"
Needing his Tolkien fix but good, Jackson himself took over the prequel — then blew it out into three films and nine hours, partly out of Smaug-like greed, partly because he never wanted to leave.

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The 10 best films of 2014

List. Our favorite movie of the year featured ScarJo. We also loved us some Wes Anderson.

This was a rough year, but the movies of 2014 didn't serve as escape, they offered accidental echoes of real life. The tragedies in Ferguson and Staten Island were reflected in angry, sharp movies about race such as "Dear White People," "Selma" and "Top Five." General anxieties about death were amplified in "Boyhood," "Only Lovers Left Alive" and "National Gallery." We couldn't even get the Seth Rogen comedy "The Interview" because of fear of terrorist strikes. There was occasional much-needed respite from the gloom. Here are the best, darkest, funniest and, occasionally, just fun movies of the year.

'Edge of Tomorrow'

10 The first two-thirds of this Tom Cruise sci-fi are so good — it is "Groundhog Day" with aliens, after all — that the so-so third that follows is easy to excuse. This is what should be clogging multiplexes.

'Selma'

9 The world's first studio picture about Martin Luther King Jr. could have been another turgid biopic. But it's a thrilling tale of a small but vital chapter in his life as well as the grunt work of activism.

'Two Days, One Night'

8 It's easy to take for granted Belgium's Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne ("Kid with a Bike"), who reliably churn out deeply humanist and deeply gripping social dramas that often play like nail-biting thrillers. Their latest is only slightly better than usual, with Marion Cotillard rushing like mad to save her crappy job.

'Inherent Vice'

7 The year's funniest comedy is, of course, an adaptation of the unadaptable Thomas Pynchon. The novelist's impenetrable stoner detective tome becomes more than just another "Big Lebowski."

'Dear White People'

6 Justin Simien's look at modern times as reflected through campus life wasn't really about stupid white people

Scarlett Johansson plays an alien seductress in "Under the Skin," our pick for best film of 2014. / A24

David Oyelowo, center, plays Martin Luther King Jr. in the civil rights drama "Selma." / PARAMOUNT PICTURES

so much as about the diversity of black life never shown on screens.

'We Are the Best!'

5 Amid all the misery and tragedy of this year, there was always this: A joyous comedy about Swedish tween punk rock girls.

'Listen Up Philip'

4 Jason Schwartzman's cartoonishly pompous novelist wasn't the worst movie sociopath this year. But he was the saddest — an upstart trying to be the kind of literary jerk of a bygone era.

'National Gallery'

3 Frederick Wiseman's latest documentary is another look at institutions, this one even more brilliant than usual.

'The Grand Budapest Hotel'

2 Wes Anderson's latest is so hilarious that its despair isn't noticeable on first viewing.

'Under the Skin'

1 Scarlett Johansson was an alien seductress in this mood piece, in which she trolled Glasgow luring bros to a mysterious death. It's also a study of ScarJo, celebrity: someone lusted after yet unobtainable, who ultimately can never be one of us, even if that may be for the best.

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Contraband. Too bad you may never get to see 'The Interview,' because it's pretty hilarious

James Franco and Seth Rogen head to North Korea for the controversial "The Interview." / SONY

Perhaps the funniest part about the unprecedented furor over "The Interview" is that it's all been over a movie with a record-shattering number of anus jokes. Pulled from theaters due to terrorist threats that are likely bluffs, it's a film too silly for international brouhahas, with a peerlessly goofy James Franco turn and lots and lots of Katy Perry. As satires go, this isn't "Dr. Strangelove," even if it ends in a ballsier cinematic act of war. It's a bunch of clowns seeing how far they can go in mocking the humorless, just to see what will happen. Whoops.

"The Interview" isn't even the first movie to target a North Korean leader. The world survived "Team America," which turned a puppet Kim Jong-il into a cockroach. Here, his tyrannical, baby-faced son (Randall Park) becomes the target of CIA lust after he agrees to a chat with Franco's David Skylark, a lowest common denominator infotainment god. Before he and his producer, Aaron (Rogen, who also co-directed), leave for the dictatorship, they agree — without really fully understanding the gravity of their situation — to perform a covert form of poisoning.

The funny thing about people getting up in arms about "The Interview" is that Park's Kim winds up as unexpectedly semi-sympathetic. Meekly introducing himself to Franco's Skylark, he's a superfan who blurts out how nervous he is to meet one of his favorite TV stars. He can't hide his obsession with American junk culture, including reciting Perry's "Wide Awake," while in tears. He and Skylark bond over being despised by those who view them as dangerous for culture — and, in Kim's case, the human race.

There are more twists to come, some not so charitable toward the real-life despot. But "The Interview" grants Kim more humanity than the media ever has, all the while never holding back in exposing the grim realities of North Korean life. Everything's building to a "Frost/Nixon"-style tete-a-tete that spills over into an outsized action climax, one that outdoes the other big Rogen-Franco pair-up, the stoner action film "Pineapple Express." Rogen and company's glee in going really far is evident; you can picture them bowling over the first time they saw the crazy things they came up with materialize on screen. Even a key moment, the censorship of which has been all over the news, does, for the record, go pretty far. "The Interview" is not worth dying for, but it's sad that it's been buried. **MATT PRIGGE**

Review

'The Interview'

Directors: Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg

Stars: James Franco, Seth Rogen

Rating: R

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Timothy Spall loves smashing his face into this scowl in Mike Leigh's exhaustive study of a 19th century painter, "Mr. Turner." / SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

Biopic. 'Mr. Turner' features fine history, acting, costumes and Timothy Spall mouth noises

English filmmaker Mike Leigh again returns to the past, dredging up the last quarter century in the life of 19th century sea and landscape painter J.M.W. Turner (Timothy Spall).

The lowdown: Leigh's "Topsy-Turvy" — about Gilbert and Sullivan creating and mounting "The Mikado" — is one of the great renegade biopics, one that focused not on an entire life (or lives) but a slim section. "Mr. Turner" goes against this principle. It's a more traditional biography, with episodes building to the genre's favorite endpoint: death.

And yet, incredibly, "Mr. Turner" never feels like a biopic. It's not about narrative; instead, it's about ideas. The subject is the passing of time and the arrival of new eras, as reflected in an art form about re-creating still life. Turner wishes to achieve a higher fidelity in his painterly recreations; he even at one point has himself tied to a ship's mast so he can better observe a storm. Eventually photographs take hold.

Even with a theme, "Mr. Turner" is loose enough for the viewer to get lost, as in a museum. It's a heady and sensual film, made all the more engaging due to Spall's performance — surely one of the noisiest and most musical in memory. He speaks in a thick Cockney, but he rarely talks unless he has to. He prefers to express himself in grunts, grumbles and other assorted mouth noises — no two alike. "Mr. Turner" is as fun to stare at as it is to listen to. **MATT PRIGGE**

Review

'Mr. Turner'

Director: Mike Leigh

Stars: Timothy Spall, Dorothy Atkinson

Rating: R

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			4 people	$60,138 - $83,900
			5 people	$60,138 - $90,700
			6 people	$60,138 - $97,400

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Retread. 'Annie' is a musical made by people who don't know how to make good musicals

The Depression-era comic strip became a 1970s musical, then a movie and now another movie, this one with "Beasts of the Southern Wild"'s Quvenzhane Wallis as an orphan taken in by Will Stacks (Jamie Foxx), a Bloombergian CEO using her to help win his mayoral campaign.

The lowdown How does one do "Annie" — nice, sweet, sickeningly plucky "Annie" — in self-aware, economically battered and eternally distracted 2014? For better but mostly for worse, the new modernization tries everything. It's sincerely upbeat yet winkingly post-modern; it addresses the income gap while indulging in "Sex and the City"-style wealth porn.

At times "Annie" vies for the self-aware pop culture salvaging of "21 Jump Street" and "The Lego Movie" mavens Phil Lord and Chris Miller. (They even get namechecked in a gag only cinephiles will get.) But most of it runs on pep, if a weary, not terribly committed version of it. Wallis does little but beam smiles and bob her head, whether she's forced to sing or anguishing over her lost parents. Little of the emotional complexity she exuded in "Southern Wild" carries over, in part because the film itself is rarely sincere. It's as calculated as Stacks's scheme to milk Annie for votes — sometimes it's cool; other times it's lame. The musical numbers are perfunctory mixes of rote singing and stiff dancing; there's a lot of swaying arms and forced grinning. When music takes over, a film straining to be down has all the pizzazz of an Up with People production. **MATT PRIGGE**

Jamie Foxx, Quvenzhane Wallis and Rose Byrne bust some high school musical moves (while people stand completely still behind them) in one of the numbers in the new "Annie." / COLUMBIA PICTURES

Review

'Annie'

Director: Will Gluck

Stars: Quvenzhane Wallis, Jamie Foxx

Rating: PG

Drama. The Palme d'Or winner is a long, long, long hang-out movie

The first thing one notices about the latest from Turkey's Nuri Bilge Ceylan ("Distant," "Once Upon a Time in Anatolia") is the length. (Well, that or the uncommonly beautiful, burnished cinematography — a Ceylan staple.) This portrait of a grumpy actor-turned-remote-hotelier (stage actor Haluk Bilginer) is the longest film to ever win the top prize at Cannes. Moreover, most of it is a series of unhurried arguments between him and his brutally honest sister (Demet Akbag) or his younger, bitter wife (Melisa Sozen). Still, it's impossible to imagine it any shorter. Length is key to its power, forcing us to stew in lengthy hangtime with people who aren't going anywhere, much as they wish to. It has the density and the texture of a good, long novel; one emerges full — and, of course, happily depressed.

MATT PRIGGE

Review

'Winter Sleep'

Director: Nuri Bilge Ceylan

Stars: Haluk Bilginer, Melisa Sozen

Rating: R

Haluk Bilginer broods over harsh landscapes in "Winter Sleep." / ADOPT FILMS

Hip-Hop Hanukkah

Music. A disco ball dreidel is just one reason to catch Matisyahu's new tour.

Matisyahu also tries to light a menorah in the venues that don't have an ordinance against pyrotechnics.
JARED POLIN

Don't expect Hanukkah remixes on Matisyahu's annual Festival of Light tour.

"I don't know where that came from," says the Jewish reggae artist. "I don't even know what a classic Hanukkah song is and we certainly don't perform any. I have a couple of Hanukkah songs I've written that we perform."

Now in its eighth year, Matisyahu says the tour is a combination of songs from their new record and older ones such as "One Day" and "Youth."

"We do have a huge disco ball dreidel, which is amazing," he adds.

Matisyahu, born Matthew Paul Miller, and his backing band the Dub Trio released a fourth studio album, "Akeda," in June. It's full of the reggae, hip-hop and electronic permutations that the Pennsylvania-born, New York-raised 35-year-old is known for, but with some rock flavor.

"The new album is more eclectic," Matisyahu says. "One of the things I'm good at is blending things together and having it make sense. The people I make music with, we work outside genre. We try to create our own unique sound."

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If you go

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Tours

On the road

Veteran touring artist Matisyahu doesn't need long to pack for a trip: "I underpack. I take exactly what I need," he says. "Essential items are headphones and some kind of book I'm into. Most times I don't even take my computer with me, just my phone."

TV watch list

COMEDY

'The Simpsons'

Homer stays too long at Moe's bar on Christmas Eve, and Marge tells him not to come home. Time to go to a movie and get some Chinese food, Homer. **SUNDAY, 8 P.M., FOX**

COMEDY

'Saturday Night Live'

Amy Adams hosts, with a little help from the dreamboats of One Direction.
SATURDAY, 11:30 P.M., NBC

REALITY

'The Amazing Race'

Get ready to see who will win: The teams reach the finish line in Los Angeles.
SEASON FINALE FRIDAY, 8 P.M., CBS

DRAMA

'Homeland'

The name of the show gets literal, as Carrie and Saul return to the U.S.
SEASON FINALE, SUNDAY, 11 P.M., SHOWTIME
LISA WEIDENFELD

How often has Marge made this face at Homer over the years? / FOX

Joshua Jackson is the world's oldest 36-year-old

CATCH THE SEASON FINALE OF "THE AFFAIR" SUNDAY AT 10 P.M. ON SHOWTIME. GETTY IMAGES

Interview. The former "Dawson's Creek" star is enjoying his break between seasons of "The Affair."

Joshua Jackson's latest show, "The Affair," wraps up its first 10-episode season Sunday night, but despite the series' success and critical acclaim, he understands if you still think of other work he's done when you see him. "Depending on where you are in the world, Pacey left a mark, and I'm 36 years old now. That's a long time ago," Jackson says of his breakout "Dawson's Creek" role. "Frankly,even before that, [there was] 'The Mighty Ducks.' Maybe not in the rest of the world, but for Canada, I still walk around as the bearded old man that I am now and have 9-year-olds who are like, 'Charlie! Oh my God, what's going on?'"

But with age comes wisdom, and for Jackson, the 10-episode structure of "The Affair" — and the cable landscape in general — was a revelation. "As a man who's done a lot of seasons of television and frankly, has just been working for a long, long time — I mean, this is my 25th year in the union, I can't believe that's true, but it's true — what is so lovely about doing 10 episodes is that just at the point at which you're tired and you want the season to be done, it's done and then you can go out and live the rest of your life," he says.

Home life

Second jobs

So what does the rest of his life look like these days? "Diane [Kruger] and I are building a house so I am a foreman on a construction site," he says. "The woman is key. I've been with Diane now for eight and a half years, and the process of being in love and accommodating another human being in your space is important. The thing that I've learned that I enjoy most about being in love and having a partner is having somebody who shares your story for better and for worse, right?"

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1 Cameron Diaz marrying one of the Madden twins

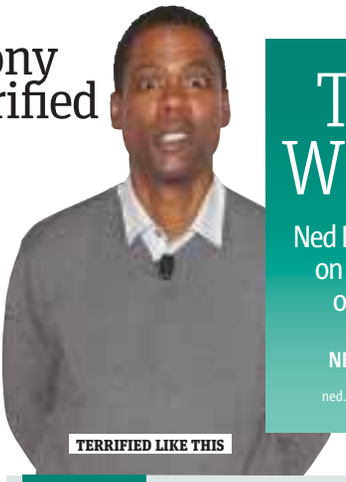
Cameron Diaz and heavily tattooed Good Charlotte twin Benji Madden have been dating since May, but apparently that's long enough to know he's a keeper. A source tells the National Enquirer that Diaz and Madden are "planning their wedding for early in the new year." Not everyone is thrilled, though, chief among them Benji's twin brother, Joel, who "likes Cameron a lot and thinks they're a good match, but he doesn't want Benji to rush into something so quickly." Which is fair. I mean, has she been around them long enough to tell them apart? Twins are hard, man.

I feel like there's a whole vault of quotes from Diaz about marriage and family that could be dug up for this. Like in 2012 when she told Esquire that marriage "just wasn't the thing I was drawn to." Or how about two months ago, when she told Marie Clare, "I'm not looking for a husband or marriage or not looking for that stuff. I'm living, not thinking what I should or shouldn't be doing with my life." What a difference Thanksgiving makes.

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

2 Chris Rock says the Sony hack has Hollywood terrified

The whole Sony hacking scandal has the entertainment industry on edge, at least according to Chris Rock. "This whole thing is just scary. It's emails, it's your private stuff. And the whole town is scared. Nobody knows what to do," Rock says in a Q&A with David Carr. It's worth noting that Scott Rudin — who has come under fire because of leaked emails between he and Amy Pascal saying bad things about Angelina Jolie and President Obama — is a producer on "Top Five," Rock's new film. "Read my emails," Rock says, responding to whether he himself is worried. "I say offensive things for a living."



TERRIFIED LIKE THIS

3 Neil Patrick Harris has some adorable videos for you

Stars, they're just like us — in that they have iPhones and find their children ridiculously adorable. Neil Patrick Harris, for example, posted a video on Instagram of his 4-year-old twins, Gideon and Harper, singing "Jingle Bells" while decorating their Christmas tree. So if you're into that sort of thing, you can watch the children of someone you don't actually know being all cute and festive.

INSTAGRAM, INSTAGRANPH

THE WORD

Ned Ehrbar takes on the world of gossip.

NED EHRBAR
@Nedrick
ned.ehrbar@metro.us

Daily video

The Final Episode of 'Serial'

Did the finale of "Serial" not give you the satisfaction you were looking for? Funny or Die has you covered. The humor site taps into the obsession built up around the This American Life podcast and its highly anticipated conclusion. Michaela Watkins plays "Serial" host Sarah Koenig as she dodges eager fans and scrambles to come up with a satisfying resolution before finally snapping. "What do you want? I do a podcast! It was supposed to be for four people," she rants. "What do you want to know? Do you want to know who did it? Fine. It was me! I did it!" Well, I don't think anyone saw that coming.

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Horoscope

♐ Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21. You will be impatient, but that doesn't mean you should gossip or make someone look bad. Bide your time.

♑ Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20. Making solid investments before the end of the year will help increase your finances. Do your best to show how much you care.

♒ Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18. Positive results are imminent if you keep your promises. Think before you speak, or you may cause embarrassment to someone who looks up to you.

♓ Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20. Despite your hard work, your plans will fall short. Someone will try to take advantage of your good nature and desire to please.

♈ Aries | March 21-April 20. It will be difficult to get your ideas off the ground by yourself. Talk to people who understand your plans and can give you suggestions.

♉ Taurus | April 21-May 21. If you are seeking inspiration, study different cultures, countries or subjects that interest you. There are many ways to expand your knowledge.

♊ Gemini | May 22-June 20. Someone will try to discredit you. Make sure you accurately present yourself and what you have to offer. Take credit for your work.

♋ Cancer | June 21-July 22. Romance will brighten your day. Plan to do something special with a loved one. Personal adjustments made now will enable you to take on new challenges.

♌ Leo | July 23-Aug. 22. There are personal changes happening. Whatever has been holding you back will be rectified, allowing you to move forward.

♍ Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22. No matter what you do, you will not be able to please everyone. In the end, you need to do what you feel is right.

♎ Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22. You can expand your connections if you participate in an organization that you believe in. This will bring you additional allies.

♏ Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21. Someone you care about won't appreciate the extra hours you put in at work, but the financial results will be worth it.

EUGENIA LAST

Sudoku: Easy and hard

			8	9				7
		1		3	6			
6			5		1	3		
	4	9				6		1
	1			6			8	
7		5				2	3	
		8	7		3			6
			2	4		7		
5				1	9			

5		1	9			6		8
2			1	5				
					6	2		
			7	1				6
		7	2		5	9		
9				3	4			
		8	4					
				7	1			2
7		6			2	4		1

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Letters

The gifts no one can afford

Re: 'Metro Gift Guide' (Metro, Dec. 18)' I'm sorry, did I forget what city we live in here? So few people are paying their taxes, all the schools are closing. So few people are saving money, there are 90-year-olds working full-time jobs. Fast-food workers who can't even get simple orders correct are protesting for $15/hour wages — and you're pushing $65 chocolate-covered Cheerios? Three months' worth of pickles for $170? A $350 camera for a 12-year-old? $30 socks? An $85 pet bed? I can afford every single thing on your list, yet I wouldn't waste my money on any bit of this overpriced crap.

JENN MATRONE-CLARK

Terrorism would fail if all had guns

Re: 'Terrorist acts from Sydney to the Philadelphia suburbs' (Metro. us, Dec. 16) One of the "experts" you interview makes reference to "soft targets like cafes and other public spaces." One can only conclude that Ms. Maria Haberfeld is talking about "Gun Free Zones." Because of strict gun laws the entire country is effectively one big "Gun Free Zone." Apparently, this gave the 'terrorist' free rein because he was the only guy with a gun.

JOHN STASNEK, VIA EMAIL

letters@metro.us

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Crossword

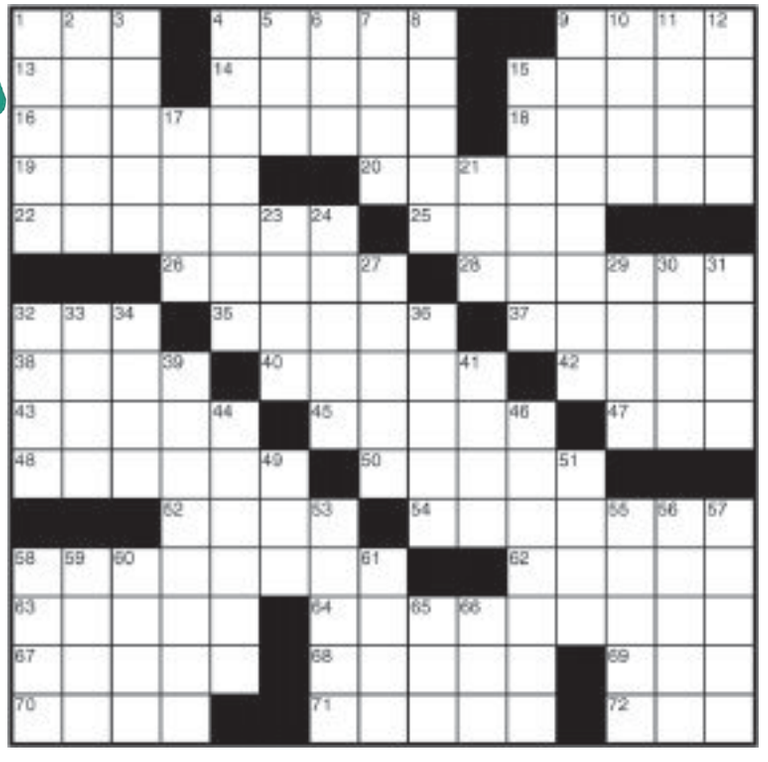
Across

1 CEO degree
4 Gets tired
9 Bushwhack
13 Startled cry
14 "The — Has Landed"
15 Kangaroo feature
16 Beach find
18 Had
19 Mischief
20 Degree of heat
22 On a tether
25 — de plume
26 Quartet member
28 Act in an appropriate manner
32 And, for Wolfgang
35 Waffle topper
37 Hopping mad
38 Enjoy, as benefits
40 Buenos —
42 Johnnycake
43 Caesar's tongue
45 Gem measure
47 Hit the jackpot
48 Spread out
50 Candlepower
52 Ukraine's capital
54 Rodeo gear
58 Brisk musical passages
62 Mooring site
63 Below, on a map
64 The sun, for one (2 wds.)
67 Nudges
68 On the blink
69 Buckeye campus
70 Earned a citation
71 Monk's cloister
72 Party fabric

Down

1 Hero's award
2 Swiss capital (var.)
3 Watchdog breed
4 Goes and gets
5 It has a long arm
6 Way back when
7 Look radiant
8 Hardtop
9 County subdivision
10 Viking letter
11 King beaters
12 Profs, probably
15 Saddle horn
17 It may be shaken
21 Stick up
23 "Orinoco Flow" singer
24 Greek column type
27 Bucolic
29 Say frankly
30 In — veritas
31 Blissful spot
32 WWW addresses
33 Type of tide
34 PC fodder
36 Hazard
39 Took part in a strike
41 Tale of derring-do
44 Whinnies
46 Frugal
49 "— Rosenkavalier"
51 Shallow pans
53 Russian export
55 TV chef — Brown
56 Kid
57 Majorette's gait
58 Deadly snakes
59 Aerial maneuver
60 — Skywalker
61 Medicine-chest item
65 PD dispatch
66 Wish undone

Yesterday's answer



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3 Storylines to watch as Jets host Patriots

NFL. Rex Ryan will look to take down the Patriots one last time on Sunday.

Heave ho, two in a row. That's the dream for most Jets fans right now.

The 3-11 Jets actually have some momentum after a win last Sunday against the equally bad, equally hapless Titans. The 16-11 win was ugly, and the execution was poor, but the Jets showed plenty of heart and fight in the victory. Of course, some fans were hoping for a loss to better their draft stock.

This coming Sunday's game (1 p.m., CBS) is one that Jets fans should show up for and should want to win, however. In all likelihood, Sunday will represent the final home game for head coach Rex Ryan, who appears destined to be six seasons and done here in New York. That his last game at MetLife Stadium should come against the Patriots, the team's biggest rival, and against Bill Belichick — his coaching nemesis, is only fitting.

KRISTIAN DYER
@KristianRDyer
sports@metro.us

DARRELLE REVIS RETURNS TO METLIFE STADIUM THIS SUNDAY. GETTY IMAGES

1 Revis' impact

This past offseason, Jets fans desperately hoped for the return of Darrelle Revis, the prodigal son who was traded in 2013 then was available via free agency this past offseason. Revis is loved by Jets fans, despite multiple holdouts during his time here and was very much wanted back. Revis supposedly had interest in the Jets but that love was not reciprocated, opening the door for a deal with the Patriots.

A season ago, the Patriots pass defense was No. 18 overall, giving up 239 yards per game in the air. They are currently four spots worse and are allowing 248.7 yards per game. The Pats still seem to love him, though.

"When you see a guy on film you see his game performance and all that, but when you're around a person on a daily basis like we have been since late April, he's a really impressive guy, works hard, very dedicated, doesn't say a lot, but he always does his job and he's working hard to do his job and do it better," Patriots head coach Bill Belichick said.

2 Always a grind

It seems that no matter the record, for the most part these two teams have played each other well over the years, including the home team winning each of their matchups last year. In Week 7 of this season, the Jets very nearly pulled off a big win, losing at Gillette Stadium, 27-25.

"Well I think part of it is that we know each other very well," Jets quarterback Geno Smith said. "Our schemes are kind of similar, but are different in many ways. I think Rex always does a good job of getting to the quarterback and keeping pressure on their quarterback, and getting off the field. On offense, I think we ran the ball well the previous three games. Obviously, taking care of the football [will give] ourselves a chance to be in the game."

SUNDAY'S HOME GAME COULD BE REX RYAN'S LAST AS JETS HEAD COACH. GETTY IMAGES

TOM BRADY GETTY IMAGES

3 Passing grades for the Patriots

It isn't the vaunted Patriots attack of old, but quarterback Tom Brady is still getting it done. This is a far more efficient passing offense than prolific, as Brady has his best completion percentage since 2011. His 32 touchdowns puts him on pace for the most since 2011 as well, a year he threw 39 touchdowns. The way he is playing right now, the 37-year-old Brady might be in a position to play into his 40s, something he recently stated he would like to do.

By the numbers

103.5

Tom Brady's QB rating in the Patriots' 27-25 victory over the Jets in mid-October was a cool 103.5. Brady threw three touchdowns in that game, without an interception.

NFL

G-Men look to stay perfect in December

The Giants (5-9) are on a roll lately — well, a roll for them, anyway — as they look to win their third-straight game, against the St. Louis Rams (6-8). Giants' head coach Tom Coughlin and Rams' lead man Jeff Fisher have history dating back to their battles in the AFC (Coughlin at Jacksonville and Fisher in Tennessee), so they should know each other's every move.

The defensive fronts of both teams are also menacing with the Giants corralling the quarterback 41 times on the year, while the Rams have registered 36 sacks.

1 The Big 'O'

All eyes are on Odell Beckham Jr. And rightfully so, because since missing the first four games with a lingering hamstring injury, Beckham has set the league on fire. The wideout didn't make his debut until Week 5 against the Atlanta Falcons. And despite the relatively slow start when he totaled 10 catches for 106 yards and three touchdowns in his first three games, since then he has averaged 8.7 catches and 123.7 yards a game and set an NFL rookie record with seven consecutive games with at least 90 receiving yards. There are two games remaining and Beckham already shares the lead among all rookies with 71 receptions (tied with Miami's Jarvis Landry) and is tops with 972 yards and nine touchdowns.

Tre Mason leads the St. Louis offense. / GETTY IMAGES

2 Conquer the Hill

The Giants' pass rush has been as impressive as their rookie standout in recent weeks, as they've tallied 22 sacks in the last three games. Rams starting quarterback Shaun Hill is a cagey veteran who is as competitive as they come and likes to extend plays. Should Hill hold on to the ball as he is accustomed to doing, the Giants will once again rack up impressive sack and hit totals.

3 Four score

The Rams' defensive front four entered the season as the unquestioned best. And while they endured a collective slump to start the year, they've been as hot as any unit over the last two months. When you dominate Peyton Manning (two sacks, two interceptions) and Philip Rivers (three sacks and a forced fumble) in consecutive weeks, you're doing something right.

TONY WILLIAMS

3 SPORTS

NBA

Rondo headed to Dallas

The Knicks were said to be in the running for Rajon Rondo's services Thursday afternoon, but as afternoon turned to night, news broke that Boston was finally going to pull the trigger on a deal. The Celtics reportedly traded the temperamental point guard to Dallas in exchange for Brandan Wright, Jae Crowder, Jameer Nelson and a first- and second-round draft pick.

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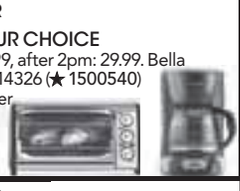

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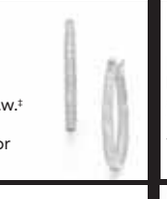

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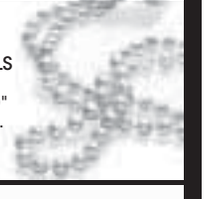

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